

opinion

What pollster can you believe?

by Clay F. Richards
United Press International

WASHINGTON — There are going to be some rough times ahead for the folks who make a living by taking political polls.

Several times in recent weeks poll results have come out and have either been labeled false by the candidates involved or proven false by an election.

In Philadelphia last week, voters in largely white precincts were asked when they came out of the polls if they had voted for black mayoral candidate Wilson Goode. Thirty-six percent of the whites said they had.

Only trouble was when the votes were counted Goode got 23 percent to 25 percent of the white vote.

Telling a lie to a pollster is nothing new. The same thing happened last November in the race for governor of California, where black Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley won the exit polls but lost the election.

A Los Angeles times poll last week showed Sen. John Glenn of Ohio had pulled narrowly ahead of former Vice President Walter Mondale in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination. Every other poll for months has given Mondale a 2-1 lead over Glenn.

The poll was obviously wrong, the Mondale camp claimed. Or Democrats were only temporarily getting excited about Glenn because he had just announced his candidacy, they said.

A poll last Thursday by ABC and the Washington Post showed President Reagan's approval record had bounded to its highest level in 18 months.

Yet the poll was unable to explain what events had triggered such a dramatic and fast jump in Reagan's approval.

The 1984 presidential candidates already are spending huge amounts of money on polling. President Reagan still relies heavily on the polls of Richard Wirthlin, the man who accurately predicted the size of the Reagan landslide in

1980. But for the public as a whole, the importance of polls is likely to decline as their results become more suspect.

If voters lie to network pollsters when they leave the voting booth, there will be a decline in network projections of who will win hours before the votes are counted.

And the people are beginning to realize that the public will feel entirely differently about Reagan, or about the Democratic presidential candidates, by next May, so what they think now really isn't all that important.

Polling as a part of political life is here to stay. Candidates are always going to want to know what the people are thinking about and why.

But it used to be that in an election campaign the underdog would say the only poll he cared about was the one taken on election day. Maybe we're coming to the point where that will be the case.



Crumbling Capitol debate continues

by Don Phillips
United Press International

WASHINGTON — The Capitol is falling. Well, not really. But a big chunk fell off the West Front of the Capitol a couple of weeks ago, and the sound of the crash hardly had died before an old battle was renewed: whether to replace the West Front with an extension or to repair it.

With the possible exceptions of war and peace, and congressional pay raises, few issues stir such emotion.

There's a good reason for that. The West Front, which faces the Mall leading toward the Washington Monument, is the last of the historic building's original faces. Over the years, the rest of the Capitol was extended in three directions, but not west.

George Washington laid the cornerstone (now missing, by the way) for the Capitol in 1793, and the vast majority of Americans who have ever lived likely have viewed the West Front.

The British came running up those steps and apparently entered the Capitol during the War of 1812 through a West Front door that is believed by Rep. Joseph Moakley, D-Mass., to now be a window in his Capitol office.

Demonstrations — the unemployed in the 1930s, civil rights and antiwar in the 1960s, farmers and others in the 1970s — have been a stock in trade of the West Front. President Reagan was inaugurated there. The list could be endless.

For years, the West Front has been in disrepair, awaiting a decision whether to repair or replace it. There was even talk a decade ago that it might collapse under something no greater than a sonic boom,

and giant beams were used to hold columns.

Talk of imminent collapse in the early 1970s when a bomb blew an out-of-the-way rest room in the Front. The building didn't even much less fall.

But a few weeks ago, a 6-by-4 chunk of sandstone worked loose the debate that had died down in years began again.

Capitol architect George White to enclose the wall behind a 38-foot-ble-covered extension, which would provide 79,000 square feet of usable for offices and tourist facilities. The cost of the project at about \$1 billion — \$929 per square foot.

The proponents of expansion powerful ally — House Speaker O'Neill, D-Mass. — and a bill to the extension has been cleared legislative subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee.

But the opponents are determined preserve rather than add, and they far from over. Among the demonstrations witnessed by the West Front in its favor, held in mid-May.

The issue cuts across party and regional lines. Even staff members and porters divide on the issue. I personally think it would be an affront to hide the old walls that have seen so of it. There's too much bureaucracy this town now to encourage more adding space for it.

The Capitol is a monument to promise, but there can be no compromise on this issue. Unless, of course, you want to propose tearing out the and building downward.



MY SURROGATE MOTHER ALWAYS LIKED MY TEST-TUBE BROTHER BETTER...

Reagan inherited 200 years of policy

by Dick West
United Press International

WASHINGTON — President Reagan has been subjected to a certain amount of joshing for saying the policies of previous administrations have made it more difficult to reach some of his goals.

Typical of his critics is House Democratic Leader Jim Wright of Texas, who last week called Reagan "the biggest alibi artist ever to serve in the White House."

"Ronald Reagan says blame it on Jimmy, or blame it on Jerry, or blame it on Lyndon, or blame it on Harry, or Zachary Taylor or Millard Fillmore," Wright told the House.

No matter how far back you go,

Reagan is by no means the first chief executive to feel encumbered by his predecessors.

All U.S. presidents since George Washington have been painfully aware that someone had been there before them.

Franklin Roosevelt inherited a worldwide depression that nurtured the seeds of Nazism that led to World War II. Harry Truman inherited the atom bomb project that led to the Nuclear Age with all of its attendant ills.

Dwight Eisenhower inherited a war in Korea that led to "M-A-S-H" reruns on television.

LBJ inherited a domino theory that led to the escalation of the light at the end

of the tunnel.

And so it has gone throughout history. Every American president after Washington has inherited something that either bound him to policies not of his making, or hindered his own policies.

Recall, if you will, some of the things done by John Adams, our second president, with ramifications his successors have had to cope with.

Fact: It was during Adams' administration that the U.S. Marine Corps was created. Now Reagan must resolve disputes over sending Marines to Lebanon.

Fact: Adams signed the first federal forestry legislation. Anyone at all familiar with the controversy swirling about Interior Secretary James Watt knows what a headache public lands have become.

Fact: Adams was president when the U.S. Public Health Service was established. Health care has been one of the major issues confronting Reagan.

James Madison, the fourth president, created a precedent of sorts by permitting the national debt to climb above the \$1 million mark.

To James Monroe, the fifth president, fell the honor of presiding over the nation's first financial panic.

Rutherford B. Hayes, the 19th president, received the first Chinese diplomatic delegation.

And so it went — each president contributing another ingredient to the policy hash that has given his successors indigestion.

Reagan, as the latest in the line, has had it tougher than most.

It having been nearly 200 years since the end of George Washington's second term, almost two centuries of presidential policy decisions have piled up on him.

If the origin can be pinpointed, the date might be April 25, 1798, during the aforementioned Adams' term. That was when "Hail Columbia" was sung in a theater for the first time.

U.S. presidents have been catching "Hail Columbia" ever since.

Diving board use questioned

Editor:

I have two questions directed at the swimming pool folks.

1) Why, when one of the low diving boards is broken, can't average Janes, like myself, use the other low board? You know the one I mean — the new and expensive one. The board is strictly re-

served, may guarded, for that effect of diving team members and special class students.

2) Who paid for the new board? Would be nice for Texas A&M's team to do well, but not at the expense of others.

Becky Kruppenbender

The Battalion

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